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SCREENING FOR PSYCHOPATHOLOGY VS. SELECTING FOR SUITABILITY: ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS.

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Purpose. The current system for psychological selection of U.S. astronauts is divided into two phases: The select-out phase and the select-in phase. The select-out phase screens candidates for psychopathology; candidates who do not meet the baseline psychiatric requirements are immediately disqualified. The select-in phase assesses candidates for suitability to fly short- and long-duration missions. Suitability ratings are given for ten factors found to be critical for short and long-duration space missions. There are qualitative differences in the purpose of the two phases (select-in vs. select-out) and in the nature of the information collected in each phase. Furthermore, there are different logistic, ethical, and legal issues related to a medical or psychiatric (select-out) screening versus a suitability (select-in) psychological screening process. The purpose of this presentation is to contrast the ethical and legal environment surrounding the select-out and select-in phases of the psychological selection system. Issues such as data collection, data storage and management, the federal statutory environment, and personnel training will be discussed. Further, a summary of the new standards for psychological testing is presented, along with their implications for astronaut selection.

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